



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

Saturday, 19 April 1980

Dear Catholic people of Australia,

Dear brothers and sisters in our Lord Jesus Christ,

For the first time, the Church in Australia is holding a "National Vocations Awareness Week".

United in the Body of Christ and relying on his grace, all of you are endeavouring together to increase the consciousness of your mission in the Church. In this way you are striving to create that favourable climate in which everybody can participate in the Church's mission, share the responsibility for the Gospel, and, in particular, take to heart the challenge of providing and sustaining vocations to the priesthood and the religious life.

By concentrating the attention of the whole people of God on the meaning of the Church's mission, you are showing that it is important for everybody to be imbued with the ideals of the Gospel; that it is necessary for everyone to be filled with zeal for the Kingdom of God and to be intent on contributing to the evangelization of the world.

When this healthy condition has been established in the Church, when all the faithful realize their dignity in Christ, and when everyone is committed to his or her individual vocation in Christian living, then the ecclesial community - and the many families that make it up - are effectively able to encourage and support young people in their vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

Thus young people themselves will more readily realize that within the community of the Church all the members are called to holiness and to shared responsibility for the Gospel. But they will also understand that there is a particular challenge and a special consecration and role of service that have their origin in a personal and individual call that comes from the Lord Jesus through the

power of his Spirit.

This call brings with it the power to be heeded, because it is linked to the efficacy of Christ's passion, death and Resurrection. But the acceptance of Christ's call is also linked with human freedom and the fervour of love. For this reason the Church is summoned to pray for vocations to the priesthood and religious life: to ask "the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest"[1].

And so my appeal today is an appeal for prayer -for earnest prayer, so that the Church's needs will be fulfilled, so that she may have faithful priest and holy religious in accordance with the will of Christ and the plan of his Eternal Father.

To all the young people of Australia I now repeat what I have told young people elsewhere: "Heed the call of Christ when you hear him saying to you: 'Follow me!' Walk in my path! Stand by my side! Remain in my love!" Do not be afraid. It is a wonderful thing to be able to communicate Christ's peace, to promote his justice, to spread his truth, to proclaim and to live his love.

And if Christ is truly calling you to the priesthood or to the religious life, do not be afraid to say yes.

Do not be afraid of a unique and permanent commitment to Christ. Do not hesitate to rely on his strength, to believe that his love will sustain you for ever in the service of your brothers and sisters.

Remember that the power of Christ's Paschal Mystery will supply for you weakness and fill your hearts with love. And the Mother of Jesus will never abandon you.

Dear young people: this is a special hour for you and for the whole Christian community. It is an hour of commitment and responsibility, an hour of generosity and joy! Will you not open wide your hearts to Christ's call and to mine: Come, follow me!

And may the entire Church in Australia be filled with a renewed sense of mission and with fresh vigour and strength: in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

[1] *Matth.* 9, 38.